

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-16. (canceled).

Claim 17. (previously presented): A preform of a plastic container, comprising:
a conically-shaped container comprising a body having an inner wall and an outer wall defining a predetermined wall thickness, said body having a bottom portion and a top portion, wherein the container body flares continuously outward from the bottom portion to the top portion,

wherein the degree in which the inner wall flares continuously outward is greater than the degree in which the outer wall flares continuously outward, resulting in a wall thickness that gradually decreases starting from the bottom portion to the top portion;

said bottom portion comprising a convex hemispherical shape; and

said top portion comprising a cylindrical neck that includes a flange terminated in a thickened rim.

Claim 18. (previously presented): The preform according to claim 17, wherein the flange comprises a flange end having a thickness less than 0.3 mm and wherein the flange has a wall thickness that is less than or equal to a cylindrical neck wall thickness.

Claim 19. (previously presented): The preform according to claim 18, wherein the thickness of the flange is less than 0.30 mm.

Claim 20. (previously presented): The preform according to claim 17, wherein a rim of the flange has an annular thickness whose height is between 1.1 to 2.0 times a flange thickness.

Claim 21. (currently amended): The preform according to claim 17, wherein a rim of the flange has a ~~ring-like one-sided~~ thickening radially extending from the top of the rim whose height is between 1.1 to 2.0 times a flange thickness.

Claim 22. (currently amended): The preform according to claim 17, wherein a rim of the flange has a ~~ring-like one-sided~~ thickening radially extending underneath the rim whose height is between 1.1 to 2.0 times a flange thickness.

Claim 23. (previously presented): The preform according to claim 17, wherein the container body is made from a plastic material.

Claim 24. (previously presented): The preform according to claim 23, wherein the plastic material is polyethylene terephthalate.